

2011-2012 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 16
January 30, 2012

Science Report:

1. **Penguins:** We caught & weighed 226 Adélie penguin chicks on the beach as they were fledging. The average of these fledge weights was 3258 grams, more than 100 grams higher than the 30-year average of 3152 grams.

The last two satellite transmitters (PTTs) deployed to examine gentoo penguin foraging distributions during the chick-rearing stage of the breeding cycle were retrieved on Tuesday (1/31). This season we successfully followed the at-sea foraging movements of 10 gentoo penguins during the month of January 2012.

2. **Skuas:** The reproductive success of the skua populations in our area continues to decline. All south polar skua pairs have already failed and this week we lost a chick each from two of our penguin-feeding brown skua territories. However, both pairs that lost a chick were breeders with Adélie penguin feeding territories at the Point Thomas colony. Adélie penguin chicks have all fledged in this colony, leaving the skuas totally dependent on marine resources to provide for their chicks. These late season failures suggest that food availability in the local marine environment continues to be low. Currently there are only 12 brown skua territories with chicks.

We took the first 48-day measurements of the season on a brown skua chick on Sunday (2/5) at Point Thomas. When brown skua chicks are 48 days old, they are nearly fully grown and, as for adults, we are able to ascertain their sex by an index that uses bill size, leg length, and body weight.

One more geolocator (GLS) tag was attached to a breeding brown skua at Copa on Wednesday (2/1).

3. **Seals and Whales:** This week, on our weekly Copa to Pt. Thomas census on Sunday (2/5), we counted 27 juvenile/unknown elephant seals, 19 fur seals, and one Weddell seal.

We have continued to see humpback whales throughout the week and on Sunday (1/30), four humpback whales were observed feeding inshore near Copa Beach. Two of the whales were tail slapping and breaching.



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Weekly Weather

The weather for most of the week was relatively calm, with light precipitation, until Friday (2/3), when the wind and rain began to increase. It became a full storm by Saturday (2/4), with winds blowing 20-27 mph and gusting to 40 mph, with heavy rain. Fortunately, the storm was short-lived and by Saturday evening (2/4), the weather began to calm again and stayed that way through Sunday (2/5). Temperatures ranged from 34-39 degrees for the week.

Other Camp News

A large amount of data entry was done this week, as the field work slowly wanes. We saw an unidentified song bird at Point Thomas; the second song bird seen this season.

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